

AMENDMENTS TO CLAIMS

1. (Original) Method for detecting the attention level of a vehicle operator, wherein a steering performance of the vehicle operator is monitored, **characterized in** that a phase relationship between a change of a steering angle (β) of at least one steerable wheel (22) of the vehicle and a change of the steering wheel angle (α) is evaluated.
2. (Original) Method according to claim 1, **characterized in** that the phase relationship is evaluated during time intervals when steering motions of the vehicle are not caused by an intentional steering action of the vehicle operator.
3. (Previously Presented) Method according to claim 1, **characterized in** that the phase relationship is evaluated within a time interval (t_2 to t_3) where the change of the steering wheel angle (α) follows a change of the steering angle (β).
4. (Currently Amended) Method according to claim 3 4, **characterized in** that the length of the time interval (t_2 to t_3) is evaluated.
5. (Currently Amended) Method according to claim 3 4, **characterized in** that a slope of the steering wheel angle (α) during the time interval (t_2 to t_3) is evaluated.
6. (Currently Amended) Method according to claim 5 4, **characterized in** that the slope of the steering wheel angle (α) is compared to a slope of the steering angle (β).
7. (Currently Amended) Method according to claim 5 4, **characterized in** that at least one of the length of the time interval (t_2 to t_3) ~~and/or~~ and the slope is compared with at least one predefinable limit value.
8. (Currently Amended) Method according to claim 7 4, **characterized in** that a frequency with which the at least one limit value is exceeded during a predefinable time interval is monitored.

9. (Currently Amended) Method according to claim 7 4, **characterized in** that at least one action is initiated at least one of when the at least one limit value is reached within a predefinable deviation, when the at least one limit value is exceeded ~~and/or~~ and when the at least one limit value is exceeded with a frequency greater than a predefined frequency.

10. (Currently Amended) Method according to claim 1 9, **characterized in** that an automatic steering intervention occurs depending on the phase relationship.

11. (Currently Amended) Method according to claim 1 9, **characterized in** that at least one of an acoustic, optic and ~~and/or~~ haptic message is generated depending on the phase relationship.

12. (Previously Presented) Method according to claim 1, **characterized in** that stepped actions are initiated depending on a detected attention level.

13. (Currently Amended) Method according to claim 1, **characterized in** that for determining the steering angle (β) and the steering wheel angle (α), at least one of an angular position, and ~~and/or~~ a rotation speed of the rotor of a servo motor (24) of the electric steering assist (36), and an angular position of a steering column, respectively, are evaluated.

14. (Currently Amended) Method according to claim 1, **characterized in** that a steering torque of an electric steering assist (36) is evaluated for determining the phase relationship difference.

15. (Original) Device (30) for detecting the attention level of a vehicle operator, with at least one sensor device detecting the steering performance of the vehicle and with a signal measurement and evaluation unit (32) capable of generating a signal (48) corresponding to the attention level, said signal depending on a phase relationship

between a steering angle (β) of at least one steerable wheel (22) of the vehicle and a steering wheel angle (α).